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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2099
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 000780

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DEPT FOR AF/SPG, DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/28/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ER](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: POLITICS IN THE EASTERN FRONT

REF: (A) ASMARA 277 (B) KHARTOUM 661

Classified By: Pol/Econ Chief E. Whitaker Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) On March 22, Poloff spoke with Dr. Amna Dirar, Vice President of the Eastern Front, who stated that the Sudanese government is trying to divide the Eastern Front along ethnic lines. Dr. Amna named Mohamed Tahir Eli, Wali of the Red Sea State, as the main perpetrator, who she said had launched a personal attack against her because she is an ethnic Beni Amer. She said that Eli, an ethnic Hadendawa, is encouraging his tribe members within the Eastern Front to question her authority and position. Dr. Amna added that because of the tribal nature of Eastern Sudan, people have begun to question her status. The Eastern Front seeks to represent all people in the East, regardless of their tribe, she added. However, she lamented that a major struggle within the Eastern Front is a lack of organization and members not "towing the line".

We Will Develop Our Position Paper

¶2. (C) Dr. Amna said that the Eastern Front is preparing for an annual conference on April 15 in Asmara to discuss its organizational structure and negotiating position for talks with the GNU. The Eastern Front leadership, including herself, plans to meet in Asmara prior to the conference to develop a position paper. She added that, although previous meetings did not result in a unified stance, this conference was aimed at achieving unanimity. Dr. Amna said that she planned to highlight Eritrea's importance in the GNU negotiations; but perhaps not as a mediator because she recognized that Eritrean mediation was a non-starter for the formal GNU negotiations.

SRSG Pronk was Late

¶3. (SBU) Dr. Amna said that Eastern Front representatives had failed to meet with UN SRSG Jan Pronk on March 13 because Pronk's plane was late in arriving from Massawa, Eritrea (reftel B). At the same time the plane had arrived, Executive Chairman of the Eastern Front Abdallah Kuna had to attend a funeral, she added.

Other Political Party Involvement

¶4. (C) Osman Mirghani, President of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), is trying to join the Eastern Front negotiations with the GNU, Dr. Amna said. She said that the Eastern Front rejected Mirghani, saying that he negotiated the NDA peace agreement with the Sudanese government in June 2005, and therefore does not qualify to participate in a second peace deal.

15. (C) Comment: We have spoken with UN contacts who have just returned from Kassala, and given recent comments by the Eastern Front it appears as if Assistant to the President, Nafie Ali Nafie, is using the local government in East Sudan to divide the opposition along tribal lines. While the Sudanese government continues to claim that it is ready for negotiations; it asserts that the Eastern Front is unprepared and too disorganized for negotiations, a seemingly valid assertion.

STEINFELD